

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON HYGIENE*

By H. J. CROMPTON, M. D., Sausalito.

IN presenting a paper on this important theme, it would be presumptuous if one claimed originality in treating so large a subject, and one as old as history. We have authentic information that the Israelites, as nomads in the desert and camp, or as dwellers in conquered, walled cities, had up-to-date knowledge of preventive medicine, as set forth in the Mosaic code, whose provisions were rigorously enforced from religious, as well as sanitary, considerations providing for personal cleanliness, purification of tents or dwellings, the selection of healthful, wholesome food, the seclusion of persons with contagious disorders, and in other ways caring for the physical well being of the Jewish nation. So, too, with the ancient Greeks and Romans, who, unlike the Jews, were not prompted from religious convictions, yet were far from neglectful in sanitary matters, such as drainage, sewerage, the construction of splendid aqueducts, thus providing for an abundant supply of pure, free water, and bathing places for the people. They early organized types of our modern boards of health, by whom the people were warned against avoidable, self-inflicted causes of human suffering, such as dietetic imprudence, filthy, overcrowded, illy ventilated habitations and the like. About the dawn of the Christian era there was a retrograde movement all along the line, apparently throughout the habitable globe. All sanitary care of the body became a thing of the past; to a great extent the human race became almost exclusively flesh-eaters, sometimes partaken of in a putrid state, or preserved from such by immersion in strong salt solution. Often supplies ran short, and famine and pestilence went hand in hand; and through scurvy, typhus, smallpox, and black plague there were times when extinction of the race was threatened. But in the later half of the last century sanitary science received a wonderful impetus—so splendidly illustrated in our Civil War, when so many noble men and women banded together to care for the sick and wounded of both armies. Thus were thousands of the flower of American manhood saved from untimely graves and restored to health and usefulness. We old Confederates cherished hard feelings towards our northern invaders—old Ben Butler being one of our pet aversions. We charged him with purloining spoons and other silver ware; but when we saw how instrumental he was in so nearly stamping out a visitation of yellow fever, and giving the Crescent City a thorough cleansing, he occupied a warmer place in the affections of our people! Since our war with Spain there has been the most splendid achievements in the line of preventive medicine. We need give but one illustration from the health

reports from Havana, for November last, in which we read that:

The general sanitary condition is excellent, each month showing steady improvement over the corresponding month of the preceding year. Taking November for the past eleven years, we find the maximum number of deaths, 2054, occurring in 1898; the minimum, 443, occurring this year. During the month we have had no cases, no deaths from yellow fever. This can be said of no preceding November since 1762. Taking this month for the past eleven years, the maximum number of deaths from this disease occurred in 1896, when we had 244; the minimum, 1898, when we had 13. Last year, 1900, we had during this month 214 cases, and 54 deaths. October and November are the months when yellow fever is rife. This year (1901) the last case occurred September 28th. Thus we have gone over two months without a single case or death. At last are we freed from infection.

Much of this glorious result is attributed to the war of extermination now waged against mosquitoes—charged with being the sole transmitters of the infection. Maybe this is too sweeping an assertion, but let that rest until some useful purpose is shown as an excuse for creation of that musical pest.

But looking nearer home—here in California—things sanitary are not in the most satisfactory condition, not up to date in many respects. To illustrate, unless one goes well up into the mountains near the perpetual snow lines, our beautiful streams—the source of water supply for most of our people—are used as outlets for sewers and dumping ground for swill, dead animals, offal, and other filthy refuse. Many otherwise intelligent, justice-loving citizens have fixed themselves in good shape by constructing drains and sewers from their own premises into the water supply of the fellow below! Along the sea shore, where the population is dense, conditions are just as bad—outlets and sewers into bathing and breathing places of the people modified, tis true, by the saving qualities of salt water. But let us hope these shocking conditions are not to go on forever. All we need is awakened public sentiment to condemn such a scandalous policy. Fortunately the evil is not past remedy. A polluted stream will purify itself, if we stop adding new supplies of nastiness. 'Tis well to secure proper drainage, which can be done without transforming our limpid streams into noisome sewers. Of course, sewage may be treated chemically and disposed of at a profit; or, better still, follow the old Israelitish custom of disposing of the same by the application of sufficient fire to destroy germ life and arrest the process of putrefaction.

The disposal of the human body by cremation as now managed is rather cumbersome and expensive. The funeral director as undertaker, crematory associations, livery stables and other worthies, all enjoy a share in the expenses of such disposal, so that many a poor widow pays out her last penny in following the fashion or stupid

*Read before the Medical Society of the State of California, at the annual meeting, held in San Francisco, April 14 to 17, 1902.

customs, when the bread-winner of the household passes away. Medical men, with a little concert of action, can aid in simplifying and cheapening such process radically. What is wanted is a light, portable, readily superheated apparatus, to be stationed for the time being at the back door, the remains to be placed therein and reduced to least possible bulk within about the same time as required to read this prosy article!

The scheme of municipal ownership of public utilities, such as light and water plants, is quite popular just now, and a step in the right direction, as, for example, there are towns near the seashore where the water supply is limited and maybe contaminated from want of proper supervision. Under such, and other conditions, a salt water plant should be established, the water raised to a proper elevation and distributed, and used for the many purposes for which so well adapted—the flushing of sewers, street sprinkling and putting out of fires. Of course there is nothing new about this suggestion, but there are many who apparently need such a reminder.

Members of our profession, so generally of high standing intellectually, morally and socially, ought to occupy a position of commanding influence. If you will all resolve when you go home to be active, and take more interest in the groundwork of politics, in the selection of those who are to be lawmakers in town, county, State and nation, you may secure the enactment of such laws as will give the people pure food, pure water, and a less vitiated atmosphere to breathe in, good streets and roads, thus making "life worth the living."

SAN FRANCISCO SOCIETY OF EYE, EAR, NOSE AND THROAT SURGEONS.

Meeting December 18, 1902, Dr. Geo. W. Merritt, Chairman for the Evening.

Dr. Geo. W. Merritt showed a case of double descemetitis, with fixed and floating opacities in the vitreous. The patient was a woman aged 22, the subject of hereditary syphilis. When she presented herself for treatment at the Clinic one month ago, the vitreous was full of opacities, but under mixed treatment the opacities have so diminished that they are now hard to find.

Dr. Louis C. Deane showed a man aged 62, for whom Dr. H. B. de Marville and he had built a nose from the skin of his forearm. The man had a rodent ulcer of the nose which had destroyed the lateral cartilages and the right ala completely, leaving an unsightly and bad-smelling cavity. The ulcer had persisted for 14 years, and the operation was done one year ago. Several secondary operations were necessary, but the nose is now completely healed and looking well. Dr. Barkan asked Dr. Deane whether the X-ray had been tried and referred to several cases of skin epitheliomata which he had successfully treated by that agent. Dr. Deane stated that operative measures had to be used for cosmetic reasons, though he also spoke of the good effect he had in the case of an epithelioma of the lip from solar rays, by which the

temperature of the tumor had been raised to 200 to 400 degrees, and had totally disappeared.

Dr. Barkan showed two cases of coloboma of the lens and iris, both of which had the peculiarity of being placed upwards and outwards, although Fuchs states that coloboma of the iris is always downwards. In another case, a boy of about 20, there was marked proptosis of the right eye, with strong dilation of the subconjunctiva veins. No pulsation could be felt, nor bruit heard in the orbit. An anamnesis was not obtainable, the only thing bearing on the eye condition being the fact that the patient had been subject to very violent attacks of asthma. Dr. Eaton thought the cause was possibly a venous tumor. Dr. Payne thought the tumor had its origin in the asthmatic attacks. Dr. Powers suggested that there might be an aneurysma, although the absence of a bruit rather conflicted with that diagnosis. The absence of pain excluded glaucoma, the mobility of the eyeball spoke against cellulitis, and the probable diagnosis, he thought, was a malign neoplasm. Replying to Dr. Deane, Dr. Barkan stated that he had not tried the effect of bending the head far forward, in order to see whether it would cause extreme protrusion, as in the case demonstrated by Dr. Merritt early in this year. Dr. Wiborn stated that he had seen two cases of orbital cellulitis due to ethmoidal trouble, but that he did not think there was any cellulitis present in this case.

Dr. Brady showed the picture and skull of a cat which had extreme megalophthalmos of the right side.

Dr. Deane exhibited some lantern slides illustrating diseases of the fundus of the eye, they had been developed in colors and showed a new departure in this class of work.

The following were elected officers for the ensuing year: President, Dr. Louis C. Deane; Vice-President, Dr. Redmond Payne; Second Vice-President, Dr. Robert Cohn; Secretary, Dr. M. W. Fredrick; Treasurer, Dr. Geo. W. Merritt; Librarian, Dr. V. H. Hulen.

DEATH.

Dr. H. H. Warburton, a pioneer physician of the Pacific Coast, died at Santa Clara on the 8th inst. He was English, born in the year 1819. He came of a family of physicians, his father and grandfather having been members of the profession. When Dr. Warburton came to this Coast there were but three physicians in California, the only other one in San Francisco having been located at the Presidio.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Impure Drugs. *American Medicine*: "Drug adulteration is a peculiarly infamous bit of scoundrelism of which both the medical and pharmaceutical professions should make an end. Is it possible, one is compelled to ask, that but a small percentage of all drugs are pure? If so, 'therapeutic nihilism' has an unexpected and most sufficient ground for being. Again appears the great need of a united and organized profession which would have mind and power to blacklist and thus kill out the dishonest dealers or manufacturers who traffic in human disease and death."

Polypoid Growth in Children. Dr. L. H. Adler, in *Pennsylvania Medical Journal*: "The only plan to be recommended in the treatment of a polypus is the removal of the growth. It is not safe either to cut or tear polypi, as troublesome hemorrhage may ensue, and the subsequent attempt to place a ligature upon the bleeding vessel is by no means an easy task."